JUMP START SERIES

A TASTE OF WHAT'S NEW IN JAPAN

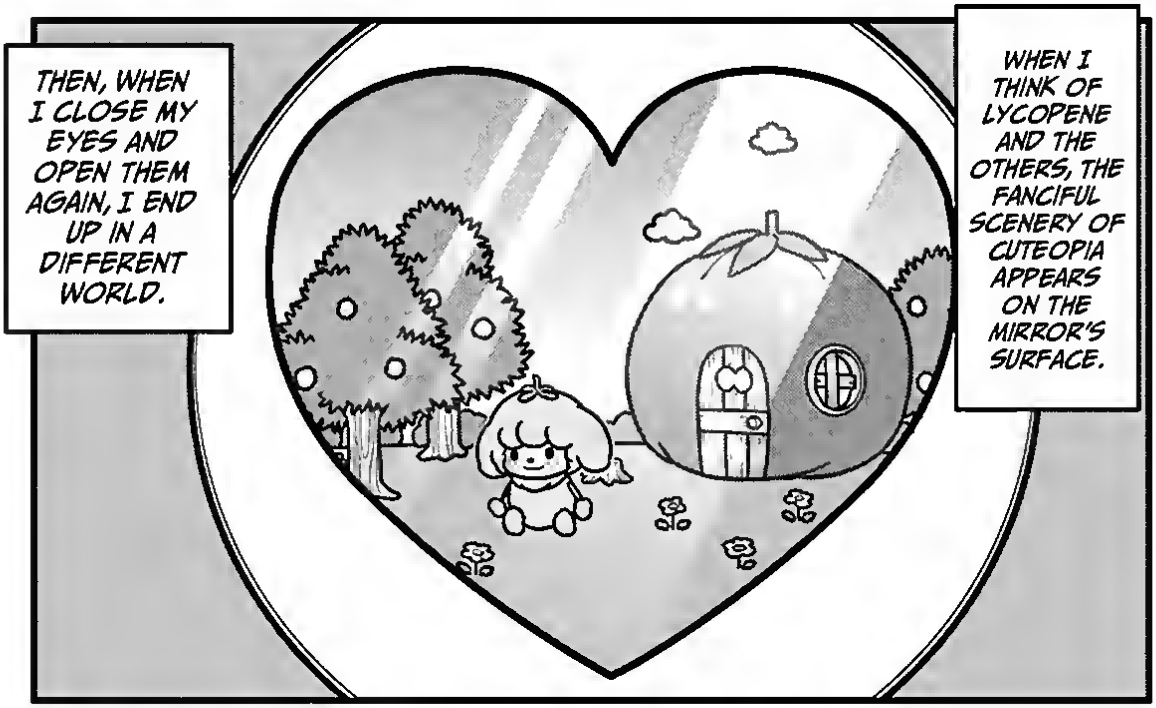
LYCOPENE THE TOMATOY POODLE

BY KOJI OISHI

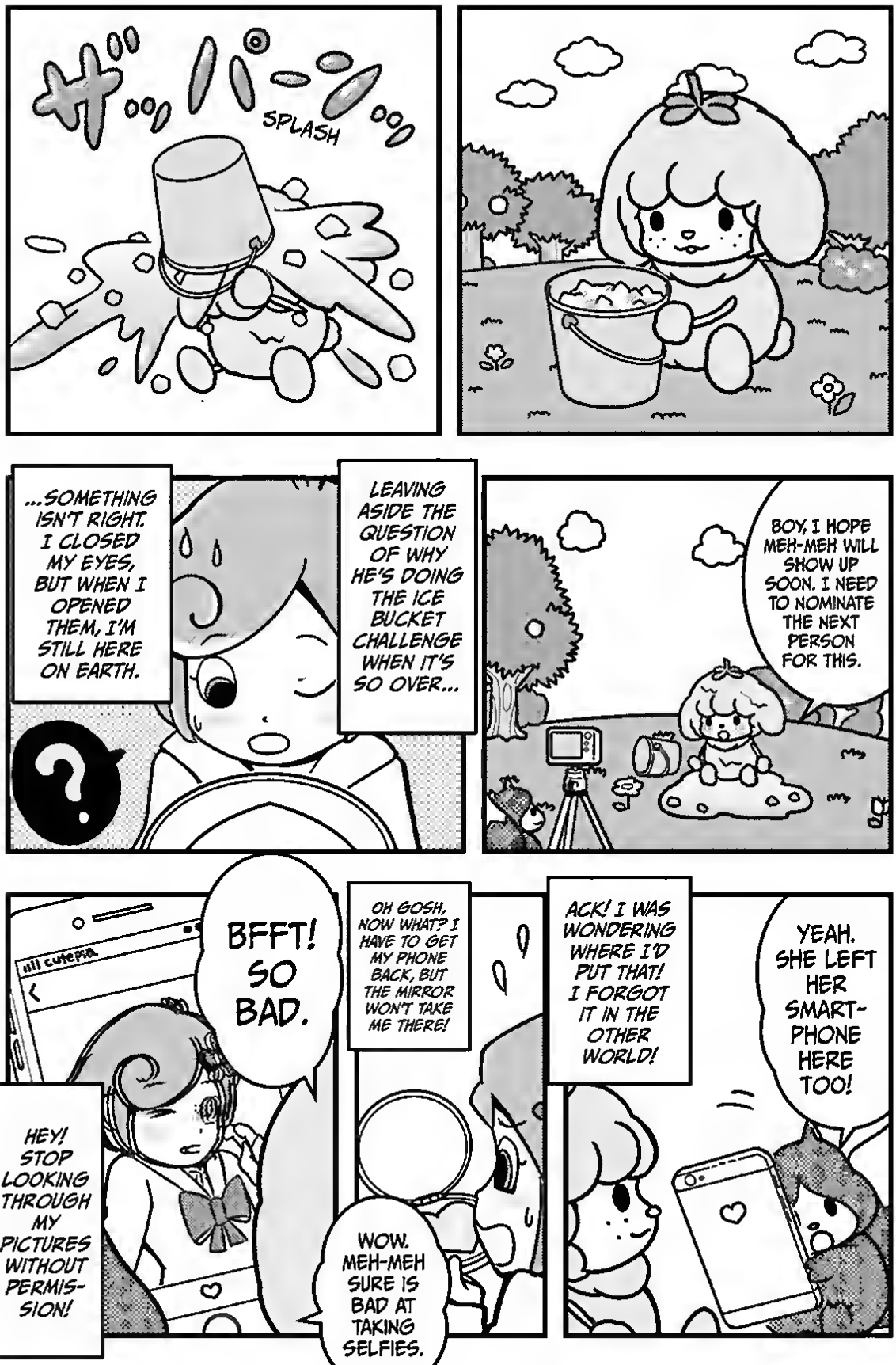
One day, on her way home from school, Meh-Meh is transported to the wacky world of Cuteopia where she meets Lycopene, a Tomatoy Poodle.

SO, WITH FREE TIME ON MY HANDS, I DECIDED TO LOOK AT THE STRANGE COMPACT MIRROR THAT, WELL... SOMEBODY HAD LEFT FOR ME.
I HAD MY SCHOOL UNIFORM ON AND HAD ALMOST LEFT HOME WHEN I REMEMBERED TODAY'S SUNDAY. OOPSIE! ☆

3 THE MYSTERIOUS COMPACT AND A DAY IN LYCOPENE'S LIFE


THEN, WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES AND OPEN THEM AGAIN, I END UP IN A DIFFERENT WORLD.
WHEN I THINK OF LYCOPENE AND THE OTHERS, THE FANCIFUL SCENERY OF CUTEOPIA APPEARS ON THE MIRROR'S SURFACE.

BY KOJI OISHI

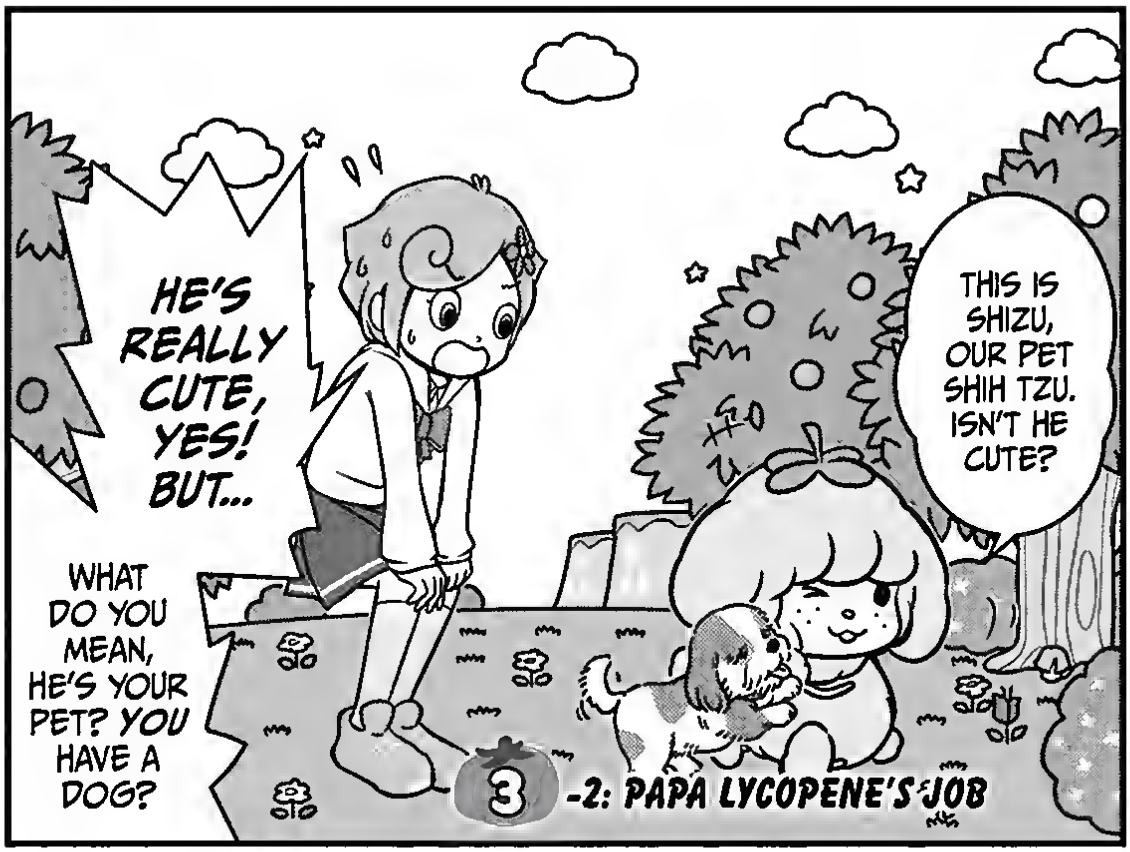

SPLASH
...SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT. I CLOSED MY EYES, BUT WHEN I OPENED THEM, I'M STILL HERE ON EARTH.
LEAVING ASIDE THE QUESTION OF WHY HE'S DOING THE ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE WHEN IT'S SO OVER...
BOY, I HOPE MEH-MEH WILL SHOW UP SOON. I NEED TO NOMINATE THE NEXT PERSON FOR THIS.
ACK! I WAS WONDERING WHERE I'D PUT THAT! I FORGOT IT IN THE OTHER WORLD!
YEAH. SHE LEFT HER SMART-PHONE HERE TOO!
OH GOSH, NOW WHAT? I HAVE TO GET MY PHONE BACK, BUT THE MIRROR WON'T TAKE ME THERE!
WOW. MEH-MEH SURE IS BAD AT TAKING SELFIES.
BFFT! SO BAD.
HEY! STOP LOOKING THROUGH MY PICTURES WITHOUT PERMIS-SION!

ULTRA-RARE!
激レア!
WOOT! A FIVE-STAR RARE CHARACTER!
WAIT, HUH? WHAT KIND OF GACHA GAME IS THAT?
YOUR PERSONAL PRIVATE
プライベートの
力士
SUMO WRESTLER
ACK! NOW THEY'RE PULLING CHARACTERS FOR A GACHA GAME!
Go ahead and use this pic! #OnADateWithMyGirl
DON'T PUT THAT ON TWITTER !!
*A current popular Twitter trend in Japan is to upload photos and tell others they can use that photo in on "On A Date" hashtag.
AAAH!! MY PHONE!!
SLIP
ポロッ
I SAID DON'T PUT STUFF ON TWITTER !!
Go ahead and use this pic! #OnADateWithMyBoy
TWIRL TWIRL
くるくる
FLAP
パタパタ
FLAP
LYCO-PENE CAN FLY?!
くるくる
TWIRL TWIRL
HUH ?!
パタパタ
FLAP
FLAP
OH NO! MEH-MEH'S GOING TO BE SO MAD AT US, LYCOPENE!

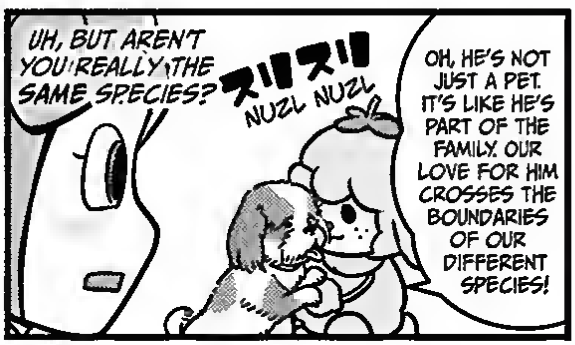
LYCOPENE, ARE YOU OKAY? I HEARD A LOUD THUD.
WOW, THAT HURT!
BUT I'M THE OLDEST SON, SO I CAN DEAL WITH IT. IF I WAS THE SECOND SON, THOUGH? YEAH. NO WAY.
NO, HE DEFI-NITELY CAN'T!
STILL... THE ONLY THOUGHT ON MY MIND WAS THAT I HAD TO PROTECT MEH-MEH'S SMART-PHONE...
YOU COM-PLETELY FAILED AT THAT PART, THANKS!
WHAT, THERE ARE SCARY ANIMALS IN THIS WORLD TOO?
I'M SURE IT WOULD WANT TO EAT US UP!
FORGET THAT FOR NOW, LYCOPENE. WE HAVE TO HURRY UP AND LEAVE!
EVERYONE SAYS A SUPER-SCARY MONSTER CALLED A CHIMERA LIVES IN THIS FOREST!
THEY SAY IT HAS THE HEAD OF A LION...
...THE BODY OF A GOAT...
...A TAIL LIKE A SNAKE ...
...AND A VOICE LIKE HIROSHI KAMIYA'S!
NOW THAT'S ONE SWEET VOICE!!

*Hirashi Kamiya is a popular singer and voice actor in Japan. He has voiced major roles in many anime, such as Trofalgar Law in *One Piece*, Mephisto in *Blue Exorcist* and more!

WILL I NEVER GET TO SEE LYCOPENE AND THE OTHERS ANYMORE? THAT'S TOO SAD!
OH NO. WILL I NEVER BE ABLE TO RETURN THERE AGAIN?
BUT NEVER MIND THAT— HOW DO I GET BACK TO CUTEOPIA?
BYE-BYE, LYCOPENE! SEE YOU LATER!
WHAT DID I DO THAT TIME THAT I'M NOT DOING THIS TIME? DO I HAVE TO THINK OF THEM HARDER?
WHAT HAP-PENED THE OTHER TIMES I WENT?
MAYBE THERE'S ANOTHER REQUIRE-MENT TO GET THERE THAT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT.
WOOF
ワン
WOOF
ワン
I GUESS MY STRAIGHT MAN TSUK-KOMI COM-MENT WAS SO SNAPPY IT TOSSED ME OVER HERE.
A DOG IS KEEP-ING A DOG AS A PET ?!
ドコーン
FOOP
MEH-MEH!

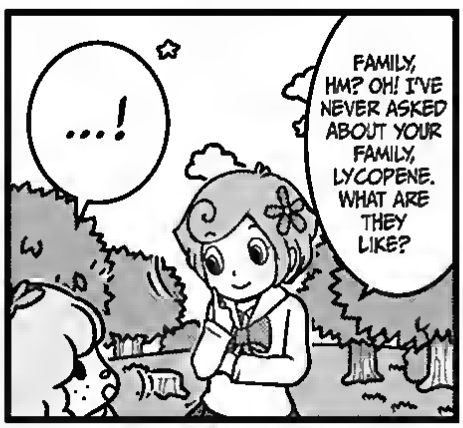

HE'S REALLY CUTE, YES! BUT...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, HE'S YOUR PET? YOU HAVE A DOG?
THIS IS SHIZU, OUR PET SHIH TZU. ISN'T HE CUTE?
3 -2: PAPA LYCOPENE'S JOB

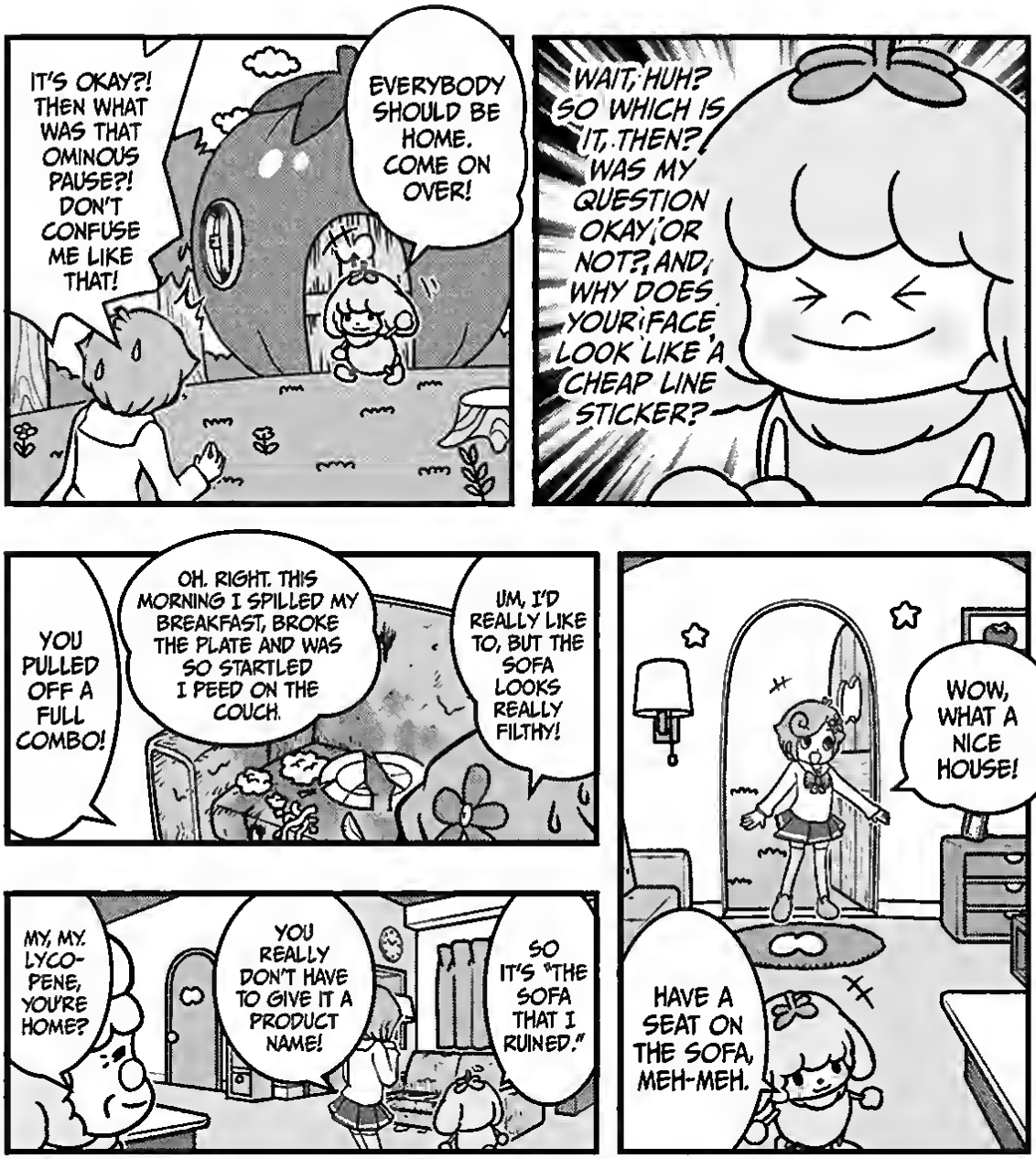
DO YOU HAVE ALL YOUR SHOTS TOO?!
WE EVEN MAKE SURE HE'S UP-TO-DATE ON ALL HIS VACCINES. RABIES SHOTS AND ALL!


UH, BUT AREN'T YOU REALLY THE SAME SPECIES?
スリスリ NUZL NUZL
OH, HE'S NOT JUST A PET. IT'S LIKE HE'S PART OF THE FAMILY. OUR LOVE FOR HIM CROSSES THE BOUNDARIES OF OUR DIFFERENT SPECIES!

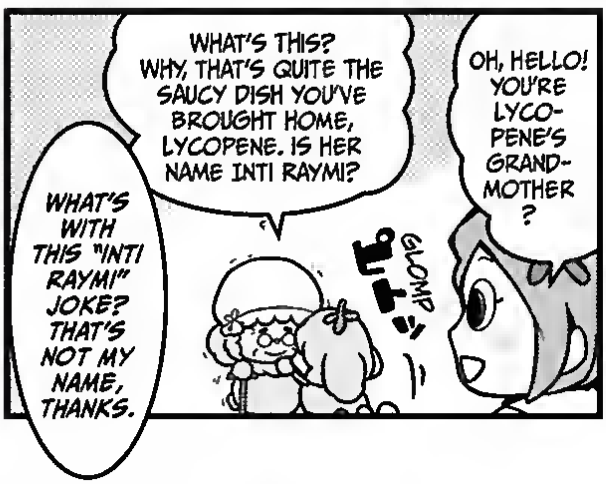
DID I ACCIDENTALLY ASK AN INSENSITIVE QUESTION?!
OH GOSH...

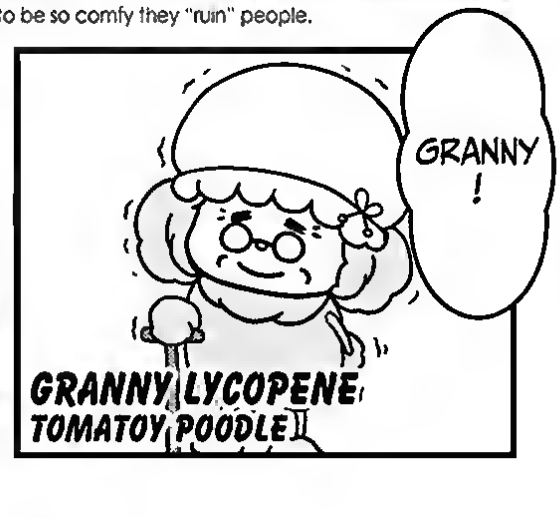
...

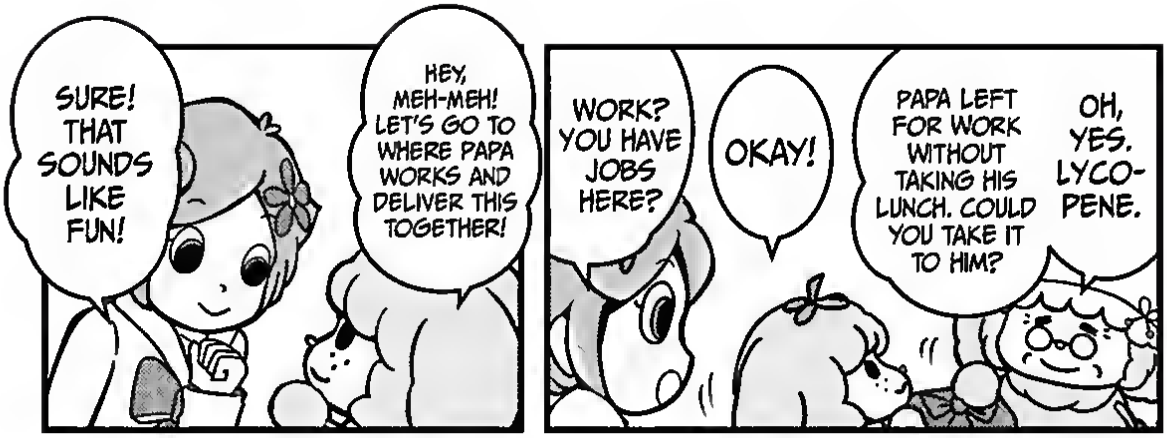

...!
FAMILY, HM? OH! I'VE NEVER ASKED ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, LYCOPENE. WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?

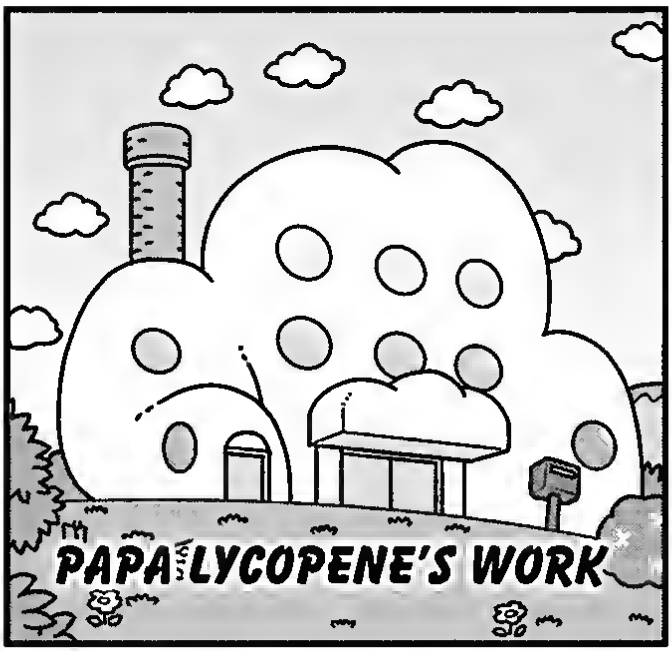

IT'S OKAY?! THEN WHAT WAS THAT OMINOUS PAUSE?! DON'T CONFUSE ME LIKE THAT!
EVERYBODY SHOULD BE HOME. COME ON OVER!
WAIT, HUH? SO WHICH IS IT, THEN? WAS MY QUESTION OKAY OR NOT?, AND, WHY DOES YOUR FACE LOOK LIKE A CHEAP LINE STICKER?
YOU PULLED OFF A FULL COMBO!
OH. RIGHT. THIS MORNING I SPILLED MY BREAKFAST, BROKE THE PLATE AND WAS SO STARTLED I PEED ON THE COUCH.
UM, I'D REALLY LIKE TO, BUT THE SOFA LOOKS REALLY FILTHY!
WOW, WHAT A NICE HOUSE!
HAVE A SEAT ON THE SOFA, MEH-MEH.
MY, MY. LYCO-PENE, YOU'RE HOME?
YOU REALLY DON'T HAVE TO GIVE IT A PRODUCT NAME!
SO IT'S "THE SOFA THAT I RUINED."

*This is a reference to the Muji beanbag sofas, which are reputed to be so comfy they "ruin" people.

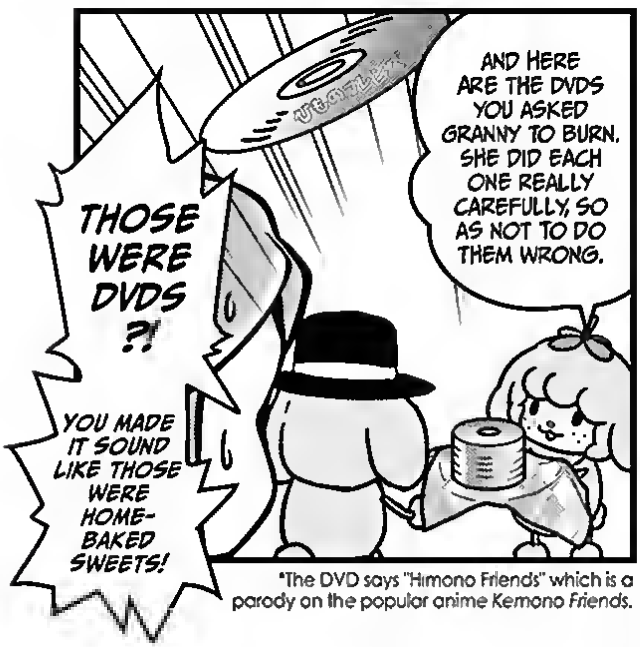

WHAT'S THIS? WHY, THAT'S QUITE THE SAUCY DISH YOU'VE BROUGHT HOME, LYCOPENE. IS HER NAME INTI RAYMI?
OH, HELLO! YOU'RE LYCO-PENE'S GRAND-MOTHER?
GLOMP
WHAT'S WITH THIS "INTI RAYMI" JOKE? THAT'S NOT MY NAME, THANKS.



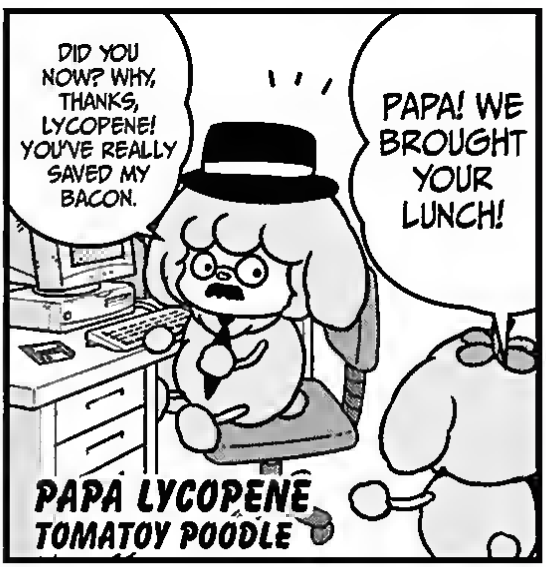

SURE! THAT SOUNDS LIKE FUN!
HEY, MEH-MEH! LET'S GO TO WHERE PAPA WORKS AND DELIVER THIS TOGETHER!
WORK? YOU HAVE JOBS HERE?
OKAY!
PAPA LEFT FOR WORK WITHOUT TAKING HIS LUNCH. COULD YOU TAKE IT TO HIM?
OH, YES. LYCO-PENE.

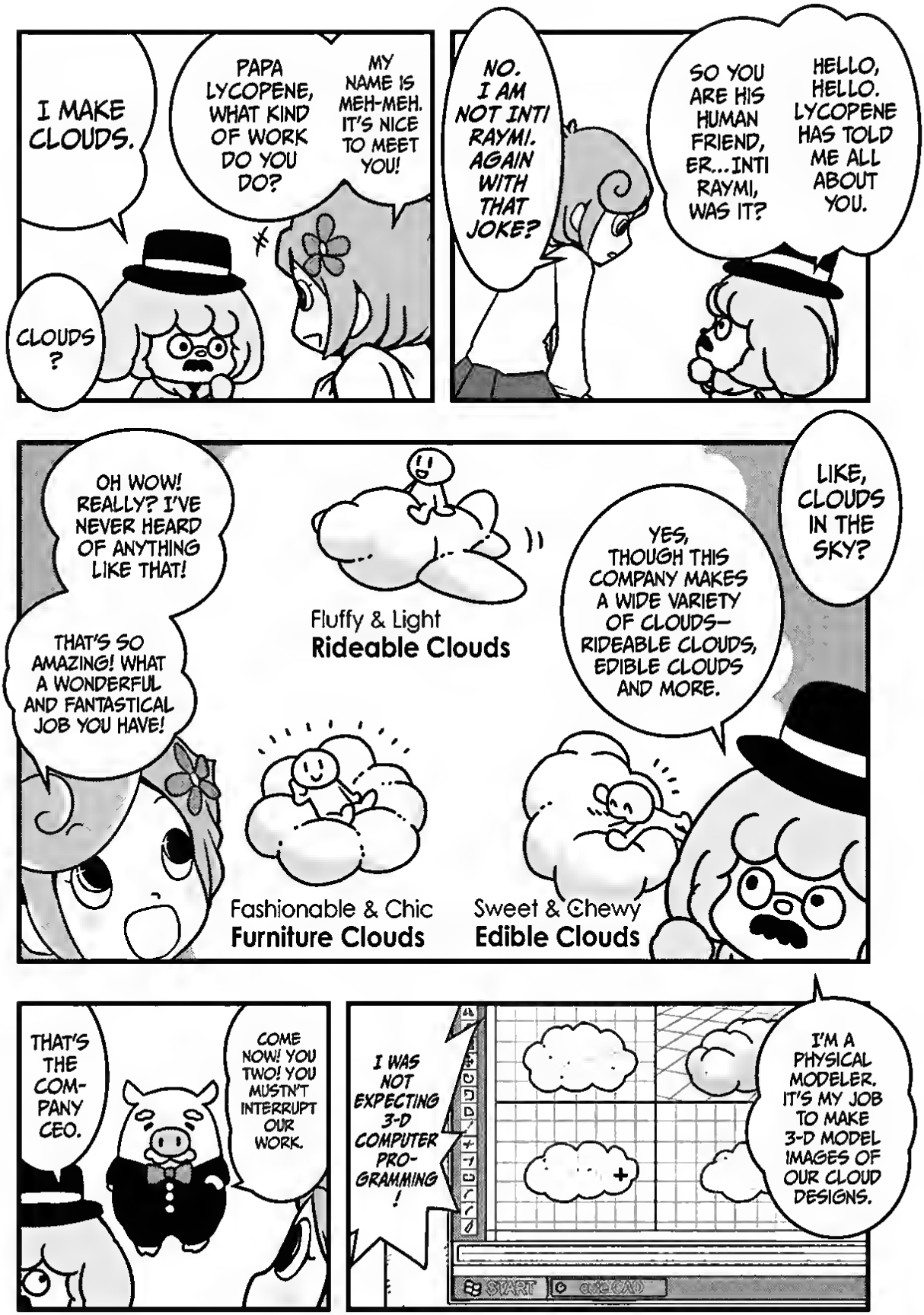


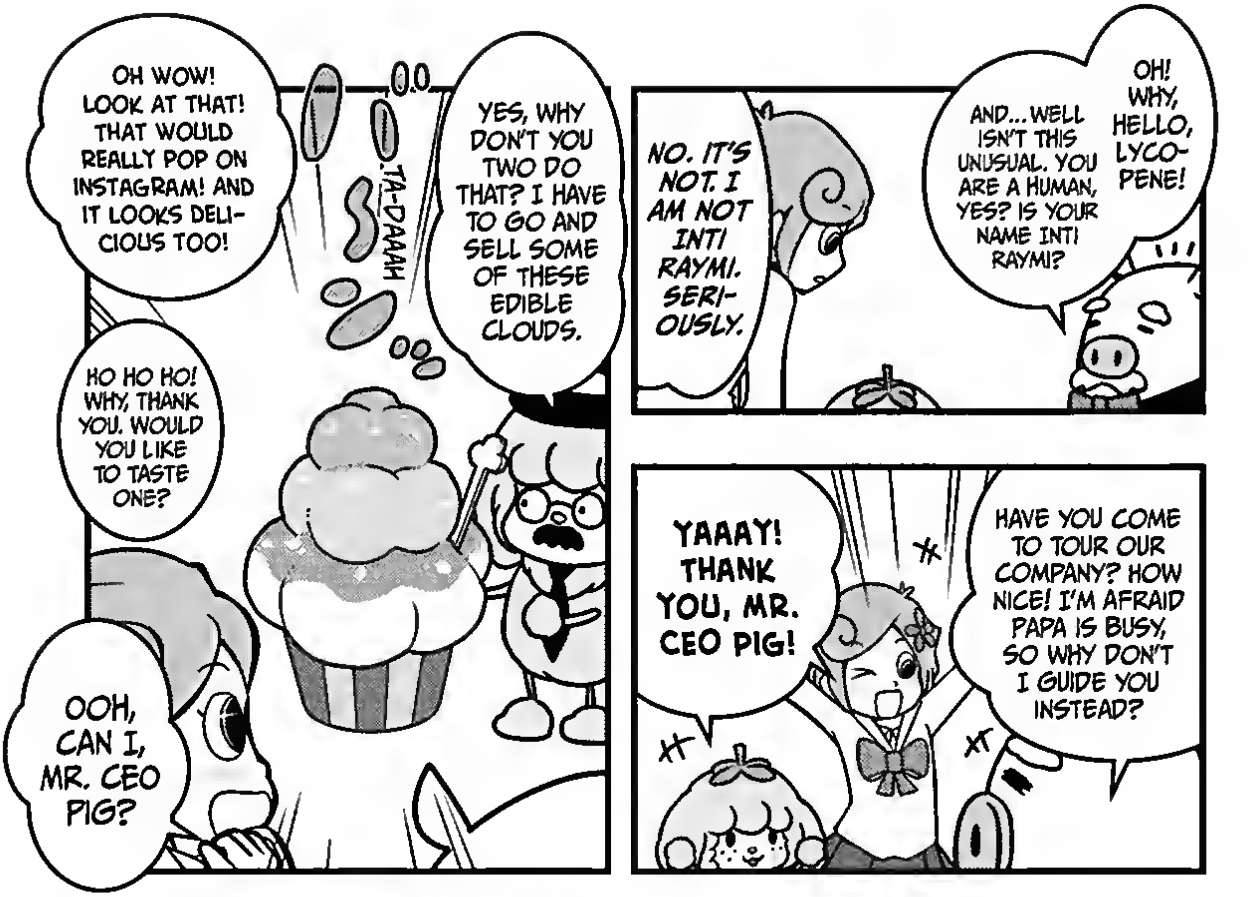
WOW! THEY'RE STILL ALL NICE AND WARM!
OH, AND TAKE THESE TOO. I HOPE I DIDN'T BURN THEM TOO BADLY.
OOH, WHAT ARE THOSE? COOKIES? CUPCAKES ?


AND HERE ARE THE DVDS YOU ASKED GRANNY TO BURN. SHE DID EACH ONE REALLY CAREFULLY, SO AS NOT TO DO THEM WRONG.
THOSE WERE DVDS ?!
YOU MADE IT SOUND LIKE THOSE WERE HOME-BAKED SWEETS!

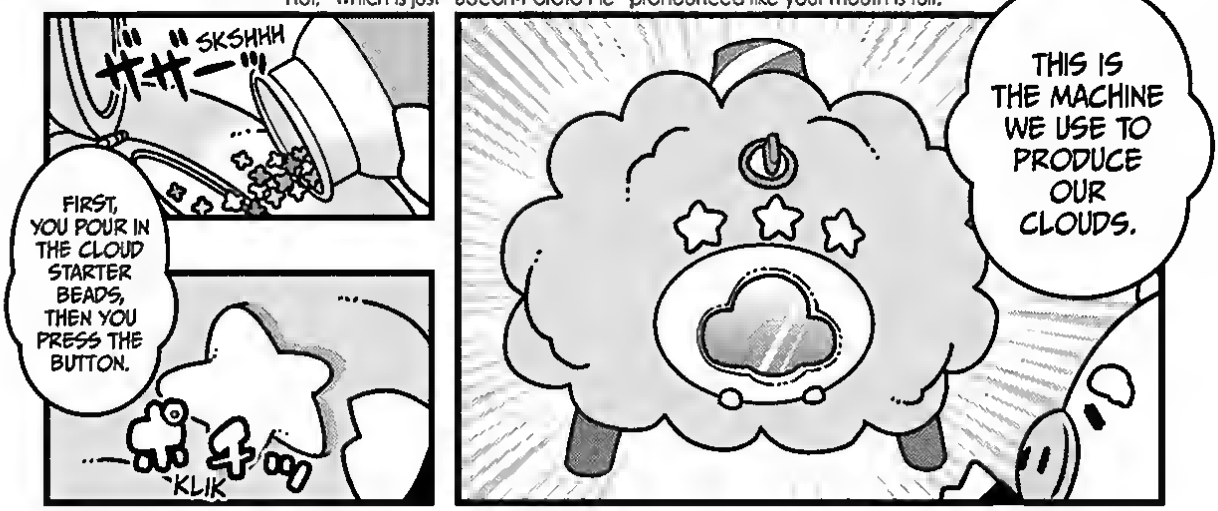
*The DVD says "Himono Friends" which is a parody on the popular anime Kemono *Friends*.

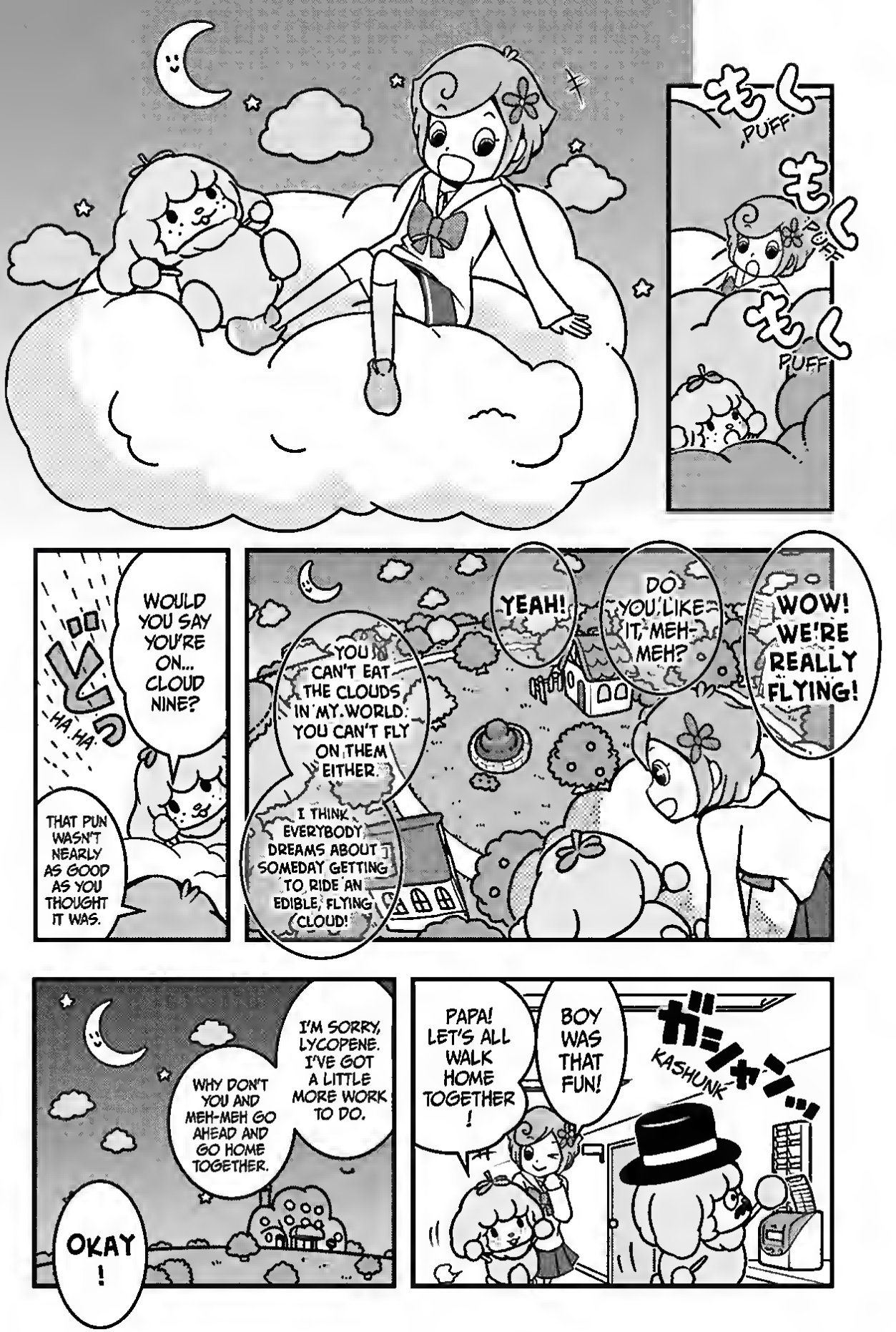



I MAKE CLOUDS.
CLOUDS?
PAPA LYCOPENE, WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO?
MY NAME IS MEH-MEH. IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU!
NO. I AM NOT INTI RAYMI. AGAIN WITH THAT JOKE?
SO YOU ARE HIS HUMAN FRIEND, ER...INTI RAYMI, WAS IT?
HELLO, HELLO. LYCOPENE HAS TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOU.
OH WOW! REALLY? I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANYTHING LIKE THAT!
THAT'S SO AMAZING! WHAT A WONDERFUL AND FANTASTICAL JOB YOU HAVE!
Fluffy & Light
Rideable Clouds
YES, THOUGH THIS COMPANY MAKES A WIDE VARIETY OF CLOUDS— RIDEABLE CLOUDS, EDIBLE CLOUDS AND MORE.
LIKE, CLOUDS IN THE SKY?
Fashionable & Chic
Furniture Clouds
Sweet & Chewy
Edible Clouds
THAT'S THE COM-PANY CEO.
COME NOW! YOU TWO! YOU MUSTN'T INTERRUPT OUR WORK.
I WAS NOT EXPECTING 3-D COMPUTER PRO-GRAMMING!
I'M A PHYSICAL MODELER. IT'S MY JOB TO MAKE 3-D MODEL IMAGES OF OUR CLOUD DESIGNS.
START


OH WOW! LOOK AT THAT! THAT WOULD REALLY POP ON INSTAGRAM! AND IT LOOKS DELICIOUS TOO!
TA-DAAAH
YES, WHY DON'T YOU TWO DO THAT? I HAVE TO GO AND SELL SOME OF THESE EDIBLE CLOUDS.
HO HO HO! WHY, THANK YOU. WOULD YOU LIKE TO TASTE ONE?
OOH, CAN I, MR. CEO PIG?
NO. IT'S NOT. I AM NOT INTI RAYMI. SERIOUSLY.
AND... WELL ISN'T THIS UNUSUAL. YOU ARE A HUMAN, YES? IS YOUR NAME INTI RAYMI?
OH! WHY, HELLO, LYCOPENE!
YAAAY! THANK YOU, MR. CEO PIG!
HAVE YOU COME TO TOUR OUR COMPANY? HOW NICE! I'M AFRAID PAPA IS BUSY, SO WHY DON'T I GUIDE YOU INSTEAD?
WOW, YOU'RE SO LUCKY! I'D LOVE TO EAT THESE EVERY DAY TOO!
PAPA WILL SOMETIMES BRING HOME LEFTOVER CLOUDS AND GIVE THEM TO ME.
LOOKS LIKE COTTON CANDY, BUT ITS TEXTURE IS SO DIFFERENT! IPH HO HUMMIEIPH RAI HEHONHOHEHOHA!!
NOM
MMM!! IT'S LIGHT AND FLUFFY, BUT STILL OH SO CHEWY!

*This is a reference to the Joponese McDonold's product named "HehonHoheho Hoi," which is just "Bocon-Pototo Pie" pronounced like your mouth is full.


SKSHHH
FIRST, YOU POUR IN THE CLOUD STARTER BEADS, THEN YOU PRESS THE BUTTON.
KLIK
THIS IS THE MACHINE WE USE TO PRODUCE OUR CLOUDS.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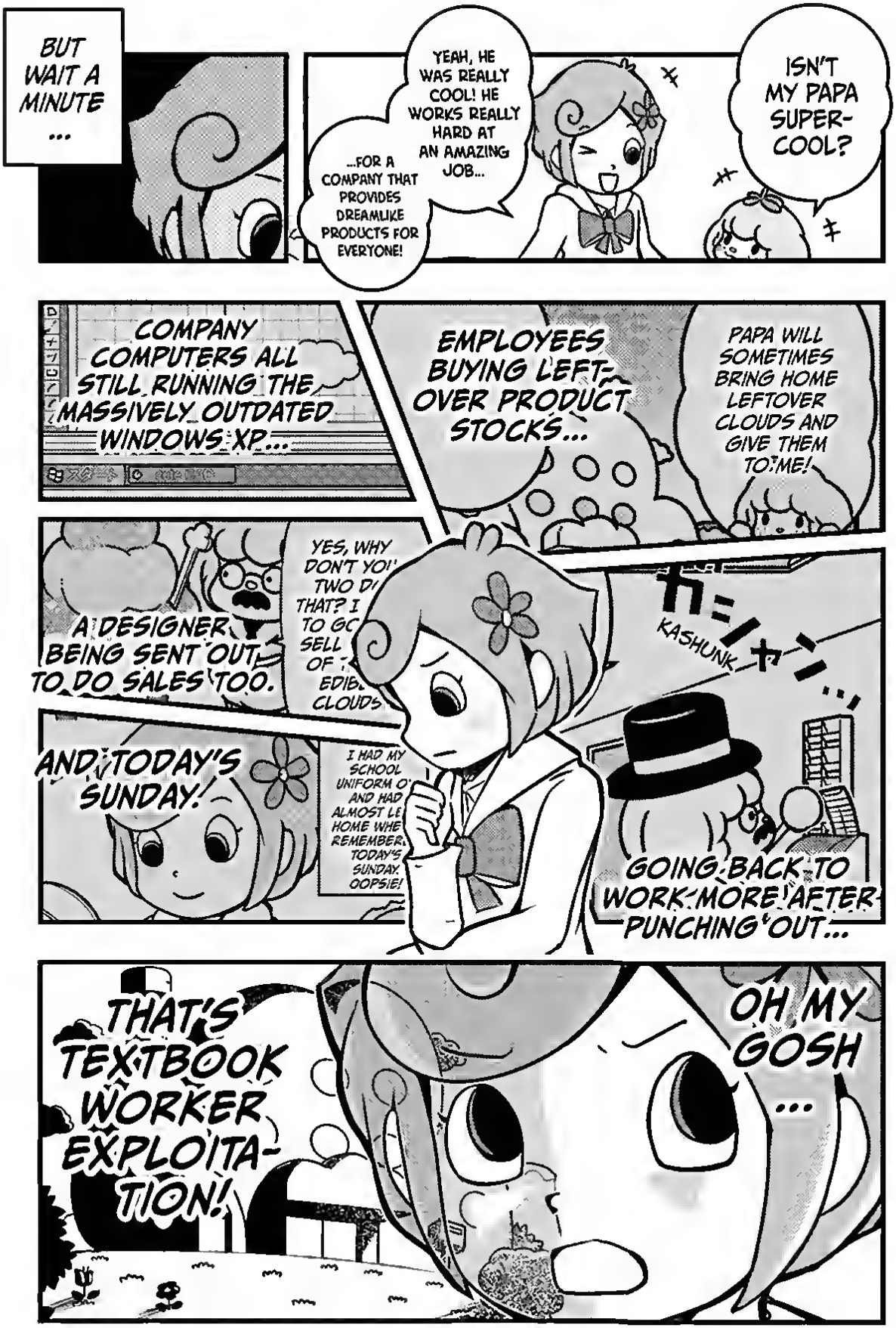
WOULD YOU SAY YOU'RE ON... CLOUD NINE?
HA HA
THAT PUN WASN'T NEARLY AS GOOD AS YOU THOUGHT IT WAS.
YOU CAN'T EAT THE CLOUDS IN MY WORLD. YOU CAN'T FLY ON THEM EITHER.
I THINK EVERYBODY DREAMS ABOUT SOMEDAY GETTING TO RIDE AN EDIBLE, FLYING CLOUD!
YEAH!
DO YOU LIKE IT, MEH-MEH?
WOW! WE'RE REALLY FLYING!
I'M SORRY, LYCOPENE. I'VE GOT A LITTLE MORE WORK TO DO.
WHY DON'T YOU AND MEH-MEH GO AHEAD AND GO HOME TOGETHER.
OKAY!
BOY WAS THAT FUN!
PAPA! LET'S ALL WALK HOME TOGETHER!
ガシャン…
KASHUNK


BUT WAIT A MINUTE ...
ISN'T MY PAPA SUPER-COOL?
YEAH, HE WAS REALLY COOL! HE WORKS REALLY HARD AT AN AMAZING JOB...
...FOR A COMPANY THAT PROVIDES DREAMLIKE PRODUCTS FOR EVERYONE!
COMPANY COMPUTERS ALL STILL RUNNING THE MASSIVELY OUTDATED WINDOWS XP...
EMPLOYEES BUYING LEFT-OVER PRODUCT STOCKS...
PAPA WILL SOMETIMES BRING HOME LEFTOVER CLOUDS AND GIVE THEM TO ME!
A DESIGNER BEING SENT OUT TO DO SALES TOO.
YES, WHY DON'T YO
TWO D
THAT? I
TO GC
SELL
OF
EDIB
CLOUDS
AND TODAY'S SUNDAY!
I HAD MY SCHOOL UNIFORM O
AND HAD
ALMOST LE
HOME WHE
REMEMBER
TODAY'S
SUNDAY.
OOPSIE!
カシャン...
KASHUNK
GOING BACK TO WORK MORE AFTER PUNCHING OUT...
THAT'S TEXTBOOK WORKER EXPLOITA-TION!
OH MY GOSH ...
THAT'S THE END OF THIS JUMP START RUN.
DON'T FORGET TO FILL OUT THE WEEKLY SURVEY!